Reification, Class and ‘New Social Movements’

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All significant social movements of the last thirty years have started outside the organised class interests and institutions. The peace movement, the ecology movement, the women’s movement, solidarity with the third world, human rights agencies, campaigns against poverty and homelessness, campaigns against cultural poverty and distortion: all have this character, that they sprung from needs and perceptions which the interest-based organisations had no room or time for, or which they had simply failed to notice. This is the reality which is often misinterpreted as ‘getting beyond class politics’. The local judgement on the narrowness of the major interest groups is just. But there is not one of these issues which, followed through, fails to lead us back into the central systems of the industrial-capitalist mode of production and among others into its system of classes. These movements and the needs and feelings which nourish them are now our major positive resources, but their whole problem is how they relate or can relate to the apparently more important institutions which derive from the isolation of employment and wage-labour.

Raymond Williams, *Towards 2000*

In recent years a debate of considerable proportions has arisen around the relationship in contemporary capitalist societies between class politics and social movements (especially movements addressing the issues of disarmament, women’s oppression, racism, ecological devastation and human rights). A central issue in this controversy has been whether the Marxist concepts of class and class struggle can and must be at the heart of any theoretically satisfactory explanation of these ‘new social movements’. In the eyes of many, the only tenable, non-reductionist approach involves decentering the concept of class, combining it with other explanatory strategies, or even revising it completely.

The following reflections are intended as a modest intervention in this debate. I believe that if the issue is regarded dialectically, it is possible to hold both to the central character of class struggle in the conceptualization of society, and to the specific character of social movements, without falling into either eclecticism or reductionism.

The aim of social analysis must be to conceptualize social formations as ‘a rich totality of many determinations and relations’. This is above all a task of *mediation*. Beginning with the ‘incoherent abstractions’ of everyday experience, analysis must labour to discover the most fundamental structural features of social reality. This being done, the latter must then be reconstructed in all of its complexity and historicity. As Lukács has argued in his *Ontology of Social Being*, the totality of society is a historically constituted and developing complex of complexes. As such it is one yet many, continuous yet discontinuous, homogeneous yet heterogeneous.

In the first part of this paper I will argue that *reification* is the structuring principle of the capitalist mode of production which provides the key to the conceptualization of the relation between working-class politics and ‘new social movements’. The second part of the article will concretize this by showing that the all-pervasive character of reification in capitalist society (so well analyzed in Lukács’s *History and Class Consciousness*) is still only a *tendency* (albeit a dominant one), and when taken in isolation, an *abstract universal*. Capitalism in its complex totality, as a *concrete universal*, has to be understood as the contradictory historical unity of this tendency and all of its counter-tendencies. This ongoing process of totalization and retotalization of society can be understood in abstract terms as the capital-labour relation analyzed in Marx’s *Capital*. But in concrete terms it must be grasped as the process of formation of individual, class, gender and race through conflictual social activity. In concluding I will thus claim that the capital-labour relation is primordial from the point of view of the *theorization* of capitalist society, but that this does not automatically translate politically into the centrality of the labour movement in the struggle for human emancipation in any given conjuncture. A genuine, emancipatory revolutionary strategy must find ways to synthesize the struggles against all forms of exploitation and oppression, without reductively and dogmatically attributing vanguard status to one form of struggle among others.

Reification and Real Abstractions

The capitalist division of labour produces an ever greater integration and systematization of all human activities within a social totality which is the world market. At the same time, the specifically capitalist nature of the process consists in its mediation by the private appropriation of the means of production and products of labour. Although all productive activities become more and more interdependent as part of a fully integrated system, nevertheless the different moments or stages within this process are only linked by commodity exchange, by the purchase or sale of what has been produced. These many different moments of production taken as a whole constitute total social labour. But this social character does...
not manifest itself fully in the planning or execution of production. It does so fully only in the process which links the different sites of production to each other, namely the process of commodity exchange. Individual labour and its products only acquire their social appearance in the commodity form. Therefore, the social relations which link together the many different labour processes in the world economy do not appear immediately to be social relations between the producers themselves. Rather they appear as relations of equivalence between these producers' products.

According to Marx, the measure of how many of one type of commodity can be exchanged for how many of another is value. The latter is predicated on the quantity of socially necessary labour time that is required to produce each commodity. The exchange of commodities involves the exchange of two aggregates of human labour. To be commensurable, these aggregates must be homogeneous and abstracted from their specific qualities as different kinds of concrete labour.

If different types of labour are only joined with other types – and thus only become social – by means of commodity exchange, then, in Marx's words, 'the mutual relations of the producers, within which the social character of their labour affirms itself, take the form of a social relation between the products.' The overall division of labour in the world market, and the level of development of productive forces which determines the amount of labour time necessary to produce each commodity, only appear to each individual human being in the form of relationships between individual commodities: 'the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour.'

The exchange value of commodities, determined by the amount of socially necessary labour time embodied in them, is in no way conditioned by the physical properties of the objects exchanged. In being exchanged, commodities in fact display a dual objectivity: on the one hand they are specific types of things with their respective, diverse, material properties, which make them useful for diverse purposes and to different people. On the other hand commodities all appear to have homogeneous, uniform, social character, insofar as they are exchange values. The labour of separate private producers under capitalism has a double character, (a) as specific concrete labours (key-punch operator, design engineer, construction worker) forming constitutive parts of total social labour; and (b) as abstract labour, i.e. as the common essence of all the products which enables them to be exchanged for each other.

Abstract labour is, however, no mere mental construct, but the social character of human labour. As such, it is, in Marx's words, a real abstraction. Thanks to the contradiction between the social character of labour and the private appropriation of its products, this real abstraction asserts itself in the face of individuals as an alien power, as a force of nature, independent of their wills, namely as the laws of the marketplace. This reification, or fetishistic character of commodities as Marx calls it, is paralleled by the fetishistic character of the state, law and religion: in each case social relations between people assume the form of real abstractions, of forces existing independently of human will, and dominating human existence like forces of nature.

In History and Class Consciousness, Lukács combined Marx's theory of commodity fetishism with Weber's concepts of rationalization and bureaucratization in order to analyze how intellectual and manual labour processes, as well as social relations and structures of personality, are transformed under capitalism into rationalized, autonomous, self-regulating processes which confront individuals as objective things to which they must submit. It is thus not just products of labour which appear in such a way as to conceal the social relations between their producers. Human activity as such, and the institutional structures within which it takes place (objectifications of collective practice) become reified. Reification consists in situations in which human activity and its products confront and dominate human beings, taking on the appearance of objective, independent entities and processes governed by seemingly natural laws.

Following Marx and Weber, and laying the basis for Braverman, Cooley, Hales, Margin, Thompson, and others, Lukács shows how capital redesigns the production process according to the logic of profit. The precapitalist, concrete, organic connection of the individual artisans to their labour, craft and products, is abolished and replaced by a new, abstract, mechanical relation of wage-labourers to their labour-power and the means of production. The capitalist rationalization of production is meant to subtract it as much as possible from the workers' cognitive and practical grasp. Processes of rationalization, systematization and quantification extend to all spheres of society. Impersonal, reified systems are created which separate individuals from their own activity, knowledge, skills and products, and subordinate them to a rationality independent of their will. By means of a detailed division of labour, all of society is decomposed and redesigned as a series of lawlike, rule-governed processes which can be predicted, planned-for and applied, regardless of the specific object to be processed or of the peculiar characteristics of the individual subjects. Rationalization and uniformization increasingly make all individuals interchangeable and transform them into mere objects, functionaries reproducing and perpetuating the rule of capital, of alienated human powers and products, over humanity. This applies as much to capitalists and intellectual workers as to manual labourers.
Even individuals’ psychological aptitudes and propensities are separated out from their personalities, made autonomous from them, and objectified as integral parts of specialized, rationalized systems, where they can be quantified and manipulated, ‘like the various objects of the external world’: ‘The specialized “virtuoso”, the vendor of his objectified and reified faculties does not just become the [passive] observer of society; he also lapses into a contemplative attitude vis-à-vis the workings of his own objectified and reified faculties.’ To the extent that individual traits surface at all in objective processes (such as production), it is as sources of error interfering with the alien rationality of the system’s laws of operation. In this way, the individual’s subjectivity is fragmented. All individuals exist on the one hand as agglomerates of characteristics imprinted by different objective systems. On the other hand they also possess an inner self, in relation to which these objective concrete aspects of personality appear contingent.

Social processes come to appear as a ‘second nature’; and indeed, capital abstracts, rationalizes and quantifies phenomena in just the same way as the natural sciences do: ‘all human relations (viewed as the objects of social activity) assume increasingly the objective forms of the abstract elements of the conceptual systems of natural science.’ As a corollary, ‘the subject ... likewise assumes increasingly the attitude of the pure observer of these – artificially abstract – processes.’ Specified as free individuals, yet simultaneously caught up in a web of events which controls their every effective action, subjects first become conscious of the great complex of social powers and relations as something foreign to them, and the course of their own lives comes to appear as a destiny which they must suffer.

The structure of bourgeois society shows all the symptoms of Hegel’s ‘cunning of reason’: a multitude of individuals, all acting independently in pursuit of their own individual goals, realize an outcome which none of them had intended, foreseen or comprehended, but which embodies a more fundamental rationality. And yet, as Lukács points out, the latter is purely formal. The sum of separate rationalized complexes which make up bourgeois society may appear to lay the basis for a totalizing theoretical system of general laws. However, once society is broken up into a series of partial, autonomous systems, each governed by a logic of its own, the relationship of these complexes to each other is quite contingent. For example, the realization of exchange value on the market does not follow automatically from the production of commodities. The rationality of each limited sphere thus stands in glaring contrast to the irrationality of the whole system: ‘It is evident that the whole structure of capitalist production rests on the interaction between a necessity subject to strict laws in all isolated phenomena and the relative irrationality of the whole process.’ In normal circumstances, the contingency in relation to each other of different economic spheres does not reveal itself plainly, as the separate complexes appear to function without difficulty. In a time of economic crisis, this contingency bursts into view as an incomprehensible irrationality.

Reification involves the splitting apart of abstract and concrete, of form and content, of universal and particular, of subject and object, etc. Dominated by reification, social life under capitalism is riven by antinomies (the contradictions of capitalism); it is impossible, while remaining on the ground of such a society, to mediate these antinomies adequately in theory or in practice, and thus fully to grasp the totality. Such mediation can only be accomplished by a totalizing movement (which can only be collective, mass activity within society) which brings about dialectical supersession, constituting a new, higher synthesis. Reified theory and practice are most typically characterized then by the opposition between the formal rationalism of partial spheres of theoretical/practical activity, and an irrationalist mysticism of the content and of the whole, standing in for the unattained grasp of the concrete universal (examples of this can be found in the state, law, the market, medicine, nuclear-war planning, or Nazi concentration camps).

From Real Abstraction to Concrete Class Formation

Reification is a dominant structuring principle of the capitalist mode of production. In Althusserian terms, one could call it la problématique des problématiques. But the description of reification just provided is itself an abstract universal. It is necessary to specify its concrete content and manifestations. The state, law, the market – these are really existing abstractions. But it is necessary to avoid discussing them in an abstract way. Concrete analysis here means showing how these real abstractions, which are the common structuring principles of all capitalist societies, manifest themselves concretely, what their specific aspects are in a given time and place.

Marx shows that the content of abstract relations of equality between individual citizens in the liberal-democratic state is class struggle, and that abstract market relations between capital and labour conceal class exploitation. In concrete terms, reification is generated and reproduced only in the complex process of social struggles within bourgeois society. Marx’s presentation of class relations in Volume I of Capital is abstract. The concrete process of class formation is one of dynamic and contradictory forms of struggle, in which the specific character of classes is constantly-evolving. For
this reason, Marx’s discussions of class struggle in France in 1848–1851 seem quite different from what he presents in Capital.12

In order to grasp the generation and reproduction of reification more concretely it is necessary to move from the analysis of the mode of production in the abstract to that of the concrete social formation, from the study of capital to that of capitalism.13 The starting point for this passage to the concrete is the real abstractions of market, state, law, etc., in other words Marx’s and Lukács’s analyses of reification. But the latter is now to be grasped as a terrain of struggle. From the revolutionary Marxist point of view, the highest manifestation of this struggle is the proletariat’s revolutionary war to overthrow capitalism in its entirety. But such a totalizing struggle against capitalism only emerges out of the mediating processes of partial struggles within which revolutionary consciousness is first forged. These partial struggles are forms of resistance to reification which remain on the ground of reification. Because they do not address reification in its totality, but challenge only some of its manifestations taken in isolation from the whole, such struggles do not bring about revolutionary change in and of themselves. They therefore can be seen as constituting the contradictory overall process of the reproduction of capitalism in ever renewed forms. Within this process it is possible to discern two aspects, which I would call the fetishism of particularity and the fetishism of spurious totality. It is important to bear in mind here that, because struggle is a process involving many parties, these two forms of fetishism may be understood as being both developed from below and imposed from above.

The fetishism of particularity is generated within the blind alley of ‘partial’ struggles which do not address the totality of social relations, but only aspects of them, and which therefore fail to pursue the genuine universal interest of human emancipation, being diverted instead by the exclusive pursuit of particular sectional interests as an overriding goal. Obvious examples of this are social reformism à la Bernstein, or workers’ struggles which do not go beyond immediate issues within the workplace.14 In becoming fully integrated within state and economy, trade unions and reformist parties end up reproducing the reifying rationality of those spheres. The ‘blind alley of partial struggles’ gives rise to the enclosure of theoretical and practical activity within partial spheres of abstract rationality and therefore within the antinomies of bourgeois life. However, it is important not to view this simply as the imposition of the objective power of real abstractions on impotent individual subjects. Reification here is both the ground upon which struggle takes place, and the outcome of that struggle. As various analysts have shown,15 life within the institutions of capitalist society is always determined by complex patterns of resistance, negotiation and accommodation between contending forces. This is why ‘partial’ struggles do not just reproduce existing spheres of abstract rationality, but give rise to new ones within the very logic of the capitalist system (see for example the passage from Taylorism to ‘softer’ management strategies, the institutionalization of collective bargaining, or the development of the welfare state).16

The fetishism of spurious totality is the site of the generation of the irrational content of the abstract-universal forms of rationality which structure bourgeois society. It consists of processes which compensate for the formal and impersonal character of real abstractions. A number of typical compensatory processes can be distinguished here:

(a) religious mysticism (religion as the ‘opium of the people’, as the ‘heart of a heartless world’);

(b) fulfilment in labour (aesthetic pleasure derived from artisanal work, or even from the rhythm of routine work);

(c) consumerism;

(d) forms of leisure/style of life (and thus also status in the Weberian sense);

(e) the formation of community identities (group closure: religious and other forms of sectarianism, sexism, nationalisms, racism).17

The formation of community identities can draw upon pre-capitalist formations (structures of kinship, patriarchy, etc.), which become integral parts of the reproduction of capital. However, I would suggest that the very logic of the reproduction of capitalism through struggle tends to generate such community formations – they are the alienated realms in which individuals form bonds of affection with each other in the face of the cold impersonality of the real abstractions of state, law and market. But to the extent that these formations do not genuinely challenge the antinomies of abstract and concrete, and of form and content, which structure capitalism, they end up reproducing them, and in new forms at that. Thus there arise the fetishes of religion (which scientific enlightenment has not exploded, due to the abstract, ill-mediated relation of science to everyday life under capitalism18), of the ‘master race’, of ‘abstract masculinity’,19 and so on.

The classical Marxist view was that the proletariat is the privileged agent of social emancipation because it is
totally alienated and has no stake in the preservation of existing social relations. But the capital/labour relation presented in Capital is an abstract universal: it must not be confused with concrete, empirical oppositions between capitalists and workers. In Marx’s day, the empirically given relation between capitalists and workers was self-evidently the privileged site of revolutionary consciousness-raising (because of workers’ immiseration, etc.). As Istvan Mészáros has pointed out, the proletariat in the 1840s appeared to be a class in, but not of, civil society. But this cannot be said to be universally the case. Notwithstanding the testimony of the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, it is possible to claim that workers (and not just capitalists) can sometimes find enjoyment in alienating conditions. Perhaps the very self-evidence of the conditions described by Marx disguised the necessary distinction to be made between different levels of abstraction (mode of production – social formation, capital – capitalism) in trying to understand the formation of social classes and revolutionary consciousness:

The study of reification (or fetishism) in capitalist society can now be seen to be inseparable from the concrete study of class formation through struggle: but at the same time it can be seen that the process of class formation in concrete terms yields a complex pattern of individual and corporate identities. The contradictory, dualistic structure of capitalist social relations identified at the beginning of this paper can still be viewed as the dominant structuring principle; but at the same time it can now be understood as only produced and reproduced through the mediation of a complex totality.

Working-Class Politics and ‘New Social Movements’

If ‘new social movements’ did not in any way challenge reification, then they would indeed have to be considered a diversion from the genuinely radical struggle for emancipation. At best they could be regarded as a potential recruiting-ground for the class war. But movements such as those of women, oppressed racial and national groups, ecologists and advocates of disarmament, are all fights for empowerment; they are all ways of resisting the reified real abstractions which dominate social life, including those abstractions (such as abstract masculinity, dominant forms of nationalism, etc.) which can arise from the very struggle against reification.

Of course, the ‘new social movements’ do not immediately address reification in its totality. At least at first they address only relatively narrow, sectional interests. But the same can be said of all emancipatory struggles, including those of the working class. If one form of struggle becomes an end in itself, abstracted from other struggles, then it fails to attack reification at its root, and ends up being subsumed within the reified system; as such it can modify capitalism, but not abolish it. It ends up being part of the contradictory process of the reproduction of capitalism. Campaigns against ‘the Bomb’ offer excellent examples of this.

‘The Bomb’ is a universality which is so formal and abstract that it can be filled with a wide range of heterogeneous particular contents, namely the fears of those who become cognizant of it. ‘The Bomb’ is the ultimate abstraction, like Parmenides’s Being; it represents utter cosmic annihilation. Such a thing cannot be imagined in any concrete way, but only conceptualized abstractly. Consequently, when it is filled with content, the terror aroused by ‘the Bomb’ has nothing to do with any experience of annihilation itself, the way a person who has almost drowned might fear water. Rather, fear of ‘the Bomb’ takes on the flavour of each particular person’s anxieties and nightmares. Like God, who can be each person’s personal saviour, and yet remain utterly remote and mysterious as an inscrutable abstraction, ‘the Bomb’ is a fetish which remains impenetrable while yet striking to the very core of each person’s psyche. To be truly successful, disarmament movements must mediate the form and content of ‘the Bomb’, its abstractness and concreteness, by educating people about its political and economic reality. If they try instead to campaign against it simply on the basis of the terror it occasions and the idea that ‘together we can stop the Bomb’, they resist this fetish on the very ground of reification.

There is a widespread habit of describing many ‘new social movements’ as ‘single-issue campaigns’, in contrast with the labour movement which is seen as universal in the scope of its historic mission. But looking at the matter from the standpoint of reification and its counter-tendencies, it becomes clear that all ‘partial’ struggles are ‘single-issue campaigns’, including strikes, elections and parliamentary activity. They only cease to be such when they tend beyond their abstracted sphere, when they are mediated to each other as a more totalizing struggle against reification in all of its aspects (i.e. those aspects pertaining to capital as such, and those arising out of the very resistance to capital – e.g. racism, sexism, sectarianism, etc.).

The common message of theorists such as Lenin, Luxemburg, Lukács or Gramsci, is that the universal must mediate the particular, the final goal of the abolition of capitalism must mediate everyday struggles against oppression. The ultra-left position is to repudiate ‘partial’ struggles, because they are not immediately revolutionary, or to treat struggles other than workers’ struggles centered on the point of production simply as temporary recruiting-grounds for party militants. Such an approach remains trapped in an abstract-universal vision of the ‘pure’ struggle between capital and labour. The universal must mediate the particular, but the universal must itself be mediated by concrete particularity. Experience can only become a politically progressive and effective force when mediated by reason; but reason must itself emerge out of subjective experience. Theory which is not rooted in everyday life is abstract and hence false. People can only accede to a truly radical challenge to reification by working
through their concrete situations, not by escaping from them. This does not mean that people should fight for the emancipation of women, gays and lesbians, or oppressed racial and ethnic groups, because such a fight will prepare them for an allegedly more important class struggle. Rather, such movements are crucial in themselves. They attack reification, and in doing this they constitute (potentially) revolutionary praxis.

In the final analysis, of course, if the enemy is reification, then it must be attacked and extirpated root and branch. The social relation capital is the ground upon which all struggles develop in bourgeois society. But in concrete terms, capital only exists in the complex totality of specific relations and identities which arise out of the fetishism of particularity and the fetishism of spurious totality. Struggles against reification are constantly going on spontaneously in every aspect of the everyday life of bourgeois society. Truly radical politics require that reification be attacked consciously, i.e. from a totalizing perspective, on all fronts. On this condition, and depending on the evolution of society as a whole, in any given conjuncture struggles over women’s oppression, racism, housing, environmental issues, etc., have no less revolutionary potential than strikes or participation in parliamentary activity.

Because capitalism as a concrete social formation, and not simply capital in the abstract, is the enemy, the opposition of working-class politics and ‘new social movements’ is false, sectarian and sterile. What is needed is not some theorization of the priority of one over the other, but rather a theory of the dialectical process of formation of counter-hegemony. This can only mean understanding the unity-within-difference of the diverse emancipatory struggles and discovering those tendencies within them which can lead to a sublation of their contradictions with each other. The starting-point of this process can only be the radical resistance to reification entailed by popular empowerment, by a mass movement for democratization at every level of society. Mass movements alone provide the laboratories of social change and forms of struggle which can bring this about. But this must not be seen from the perspective of an ecletic coalition, of a simple sum of different movements. We must seek a concrete universal, something more than a juxtaposition of abstract universal and concrete particular, more than the simple sum of discrete individual and group identities. The dialectic of everyday struggles and final goal of human emancipation has to be the guiding principle; and both the final goal and the movement to achieve it must constantly be in the process of being consciously transcended and reconstituted on ever higher levels, in a totalizing dialectical process.

Notes
Earlier versions of this article were presented to the Joint Seminar of the Departments of Sociology and Political Science of the University of Regina, Regina, Saskatchewan, on 5 April 1989, and to the annual conference of the Society for Socialist Studies, Laval University, Quebec, on 1 June 1989. Some material for this article is drawn from my D. Phil. thesis, Lukács’s Aesthetics and Ontology, 1908–23, University of Sussex, 1989. My thanks go to the members of Brighton Anti-Nuclear Campaign (1980–82); to Sheila Somers, Pat Lupton, Kelly Diebel and Joe Roberts; and especially to Bill Livant and Michelle Weinroth.


4 Ibid.


6 Harry Braverman analyzed this process exhaustively, and formulated a general law of the capitalist labour process, according to which capitalist development entails a general tendency towards the ever greater polarization of simple and complex labour.


8 Ibid., p. 131.

9 Ibid., p. 102.


12 For this reason too, the much-debated issue of class boundaries (e.g. in E. O. Wright’s Class, Crisis and the State, or in Nicos Poulantzas’s concept of the ‘nouvelle petite bourgeoisie’ in Les classes sociales dans le capitalisme aujourd’hui, Paris, 1974) is perhaps something of a spurious problem, to the extent that much of the reason for the debate disappears if the concept of boundary is grasped dialectically, rather than in a static fashion. Poulantzas can be seen to be absolutely on the right track in seeking to define classes in political and ideological, as well as abstractly economic terms, and in advancing his distinction between modes of production and social formations. On the other hand he loses his way in viewing totality on the undialectical Althusserian model of a combination of instances and modes of production. As a follower of Mao, he ought perhaps to have followed the Chairman’s recommendation not to try to combine two into one, but rather to discover how one divides into two – in other words to reject eclecticism and embrace dialectics.


It is this process of constant struggle back and forth between labour and capital which in concrete terms forms classes in capitalist society. See David Stark, op. cit. Erik Olin Wright’s notion of ‘contradictory class locations’ provides some sense of this, although he presents it in a rather static and abstract way.

Consumerism, status and community identities (items (c), (d) and (e) correspond roughly to David Lockwood’s construction of three ideal-types of working-class consciousness in Britain, the ‘privatized’, ‘deferential’ and ‘traditional’ worker respectively. See D. Lockwood, ‘Sources of Variation in Working-Class Images of Society’, Sociological Review, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1966. These three types of course also correspond roughly to Max Weber’s notions of individual, status and class. See Economy and Society, Berkeley, 1978.

There have been many studies of the ways in which justified resistance to oppression by particular groups takes on forms oppressive to other groups. See for example Paul Willis’s attempt, in Learning to Labour, to show how working-class youths may derive a sense of empowerment from the cultivation of a sexist and racist male culture. An incomparable, albeit fictional expression of this can be found in Yilmaz Güney’s film Yol, which portrays men crushed by state repression who find a sense of identity and empowerment in the embrace of an even more reactionary, murderous patriarchal culture.

On this idea of the ill-mediated character of science and everyday life, and how it perpetuates religious ontologies, see G. Lukács, Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins, especially the introduction and chapters 3 and 4 of Volume II.


See Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844), in Early Writings, introduced by L. Colletti, translated by Gregor Benton and Rodney Livingstone, Harmondsworth, 1975, pp. 322-34.

The slogan of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament on its massive national demonstration in London in October 1981.